

expressed the idea that biblical texts entail a dialogical polarity that he described as the dynamic between “structure legitimation” and the “embrace of pain.” This polar tension is not identified by W., yet the theology of Leviticus seems to call for just such a treatment. Leviticus can be read as a text that mandates a particular set of behaviors sanctioned by God and controlled by the priesthood, but also as an attempt to create and preserve a threatened and valued identity in a hostile world—as recent work on the connection between purity thinking and trauma indicates (e.g., Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile [597/587–539 BCE],” in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* [ed. James M. Scott; JSPSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1997] 7-36, here 33). W.’s reflections also show that he assumes the normativity of the creation–fall paradigm of Christian theology. It is questionable, however, whether this construct fairly reflects the worldview of Leviticus. Is there not, as in Judaism, a possibility of reading Priestly assumptions more optimistically? On this reading law and ritual are propaedeutic for character development and actually offer a hopeful perspective for the human condition, a note that W. himself sounds in his remarks on Leviticus 26.

In summary, this book is very much an introduction to themes relevant to critical commentary on Leviticus. Its intended readership is alerted to a large number of problems involved in the book’s analysis and interpretation, almost all of which call for further investigation and reflection. It may be hoped that some will be spurred to deeper engagement with the text as a result of their encounters with the material W. presents.

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DAVID P. WRIGHT, *Inventing God’s Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Pp. xiv + 589. \$74.

The work under review is the most recent manifestation of the “Brandeis school” of pentateuchal legal studies, according to which subversive emulation of earlier sources characterizes the relationship between the different Hebrew legal corpora. Bernard M. Levinson’s *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Jeffrey Stackert’s *Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Legislation* (FAT 52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) both originated as Brandeis doctoral theses (1991 and 2006). Yet unlike these previous authors, who identify native Israelite sources, Wright alleges that the Covenant Code’s (CC) main source came from Mesopotamia. The hand that produced the entire CC, from the altar law in Exodus 20 through the festival laws in Exodus 23 (and probably some surrounding narrative as well), drew directly on the Akkadian text of the Laws of Hammurabi (LH). According to W., this sophisticated reuse of a foreign text, including not only its legal core but also its prologue and epilogue, must have occurred during Assyria’s domination of Judah, when direct contact with the cuneiform canon was possible. Thus, the CC (dated by W. to 740–640 B.C.E.) turns out to be “a symbolic counterstatement to the Assyrian hegemony prevailing at the time of its composition” (p. 346).

By exposing the LH as the CC’s main source, W. supports claims for the CC’s unity

despite its diverse legal formulations. Apodictic and participial laws are as much part of the original CC as the surrounding casuistic laws. Appeal to the LH even explains apparent interruptions in the CC's logical flow. Thus, for example, W. interprets the intrusion of the kidnapping law (21:16) in the "child rebellion" sequence (21:15, 17) as an imitation of a similar disruption in the LH: the law of the wet nurse who contracts for a second child (LH 194) diverges from the "child rebellion" sequence in LH 192-93, 195 (pp. 197-99). Complex cross-referencing—based on an ambiguous Sumerogram and the presence of capital punishment—led away from the wet-nurse law to the kidnapping law in LH 14. The result is that a kidnapping law, directly parallel to LH 14, occurs in the CC instead of the expected wet-nurse law, but it is just as disruptive.

Wright detects similar sophistry, hardly limited to the "cross-referencing" just described, throughout the CC. He points to revision techniques such as inversion of order (p. 236), disambiguation (p. 220), generalization (pp. 144, 209, 267), and "conceptual inversion" (pp. 134, 139, 233, 301). All of these serve the broader, strictly legal (rather than ethical) goal of creating an improved Hebrew digest of the LH that solves its source's logical inconsistencies (pp. 186, 306). Thus, contrary to the "traditions model" (p. 21), the connection between the two texts is not simply that both are expressions of a common legal culture. Only direct dependence between the two texts could have led to such deep and pervasive parallels.

Wright is aware that parts of his bold thesis may not withstand scholarly scrutiny. He readily admits that "several of the similarities [between the CC and the LH] identified by this study are not as strong as other similarities" (p. 26). This is especially true because W. believes that the CC so thoroughly transformed the LH that the obscuring of parallels is only to be expected. From this perspective, it is hardly surprising that the connections W. detects between the texts have remained unnoticed for over a century since the discovery of the LH at Susa!

Scholars used to the more obvious parallels between the CC and Akkadian legal corpora may question the entire argument for direct dependence and all of its consequences. They may prefer to judge each law collection on its own and to find internal criteria to explain the "compositional logic." For example, the kidnapping law (21:16) noted earlier may not be as intrusive as W. suggests. Instead, it may fit neatly into 21:12-17, all of which governs cases of capital punishment, arranged in descending order of physical severity of the action committed (see, most recently, Barry L. Eichler, "Exodus 21:22-25 Revisited: Methodological Considerations," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* [ed. Chaim Cohen et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008] 11-29, here 22). Once the CC's law is no longer seen as intrusive, it probably does not mimic the intrusion of the wet-nurse law in a similar (but hardly exactly parallel) context in the LH. The only remaining parallel would be the obvious one to the actual kidnapping law (LH 14), which even W. cannot ignore but which does not necessarily support a claim for direct borrowing.

A thesis as revolutionary as W.'s demands a thorough argument. This book certainly makes one, in 359 pages of text, followed by 144 pages of notes and forty-one pages of up-to-date bibliography. Its detailed discussions of Hebrew terms in the CC, such as *ṣāšôn* (p. 177) and the root *b-ṣ-r* (pp. 238-39), demonstrate that no aspect of the text has escaped

W.'s attention. Whether or not one agrees with its conclusions, it is certainly an excellent repository of research on the CC and the LH. In sum, this work is controversial in the best sense of the word: it will surely stimulate debate on the comparative method in studying not only the CC and the LH but other texts as well.

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JEREMY W. BARRIER, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (WUNT 2/270; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). Pp. xx + 232. Paper €59.

This introduction to and commentary on chaps. 3–4 of the *Acts of Paul* is a revised dissertation directed by Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., at Brite Divinity School (2008). Barrier's main thesis emerges fifteen pages from the end (p. 173): the purpose of the *Acts of Paul* is "to demonstrate and sanction the apostolic work of the female Thecla, in opposition to those who are arguing for the silencing of women. . . ." Thecla's apostolic commission arrives with her baptism. This thesis, although not entirely original and not without some difficulties, would have been worth expounding in a conventional dissertation, but B. chose instead to attempt a commentary. The format evokes the Anchor Bible, with the inclusion of a Greek text.

Linguistic difficulties emerge. Latin appears to be a somewhat *terra incognita* to the author (e.g., "*damnati ad bestias*," for *damnatio* [p. 141]). Despite frequent citations of Coptic, such a fundamental error as characterizing the verb-formative prefix *r-* as a pronoun (p. 180) is not reassuring. The translation of Greek is too literal and faulty to be of use. Imperfects and present participles are always given a durative rendition (as, inconsistently, are some aorists). Many verbs are gratuitously parsed. Errors include overlooking a genitive absolute (p. 121); treating a circumstantial participle as an attributive (p. 124); construing the article as an exclamation (p. 132); and mistakes in declension, person, and tense (pp. 126, 184, 187, respectively). An egregious infelicity is the translation of the term for the long, wide belt with which Thecla can cover her genitals (*Acts Paul* 4.8/3.33) as "underpants," a word also and even less suitably chosen for the jeweled belt of Xanthippe (*Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* 13 [p. 114 n. 5]), despite the correct understanding displayed on p. 52 n. 222.

English caps the list of linguistic problems. The book is difficult to read. At times, especially in the introductory section, B. ubiquitously employs the first person singular and offers such shopworn hyperboles as "incredible/ly." B. declines to use conventional academic prose, not for the sake of vividness but from apparent inattention to normal forms. Many sentences are convoluted; pursuit of comprehension demands frequent rereadings. Blunt imperatives like "cut" produce a choppy effect. Punctuation is erratic.

Barrier does not elucidate a general textual theory. At times he appeals, often with justice, to the *lectio difficilior*. He tends to prefer the Coptic version. In some cases the differences are clear translation variants; others may indicate the absence of later accretions (or abbreviations by a Coptic editor). B. well illustrates the connections between the chapters about Paul and Thecla and the rest of the *Acts of Paul*. He does not put forth a hypothesis about the origins of the Thecla portion, in particular the relation between chaps. 3 and 4. His neglect of the scholarship produced by Martin Ebner and associates (e.g., *Aus Liebe zu*

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